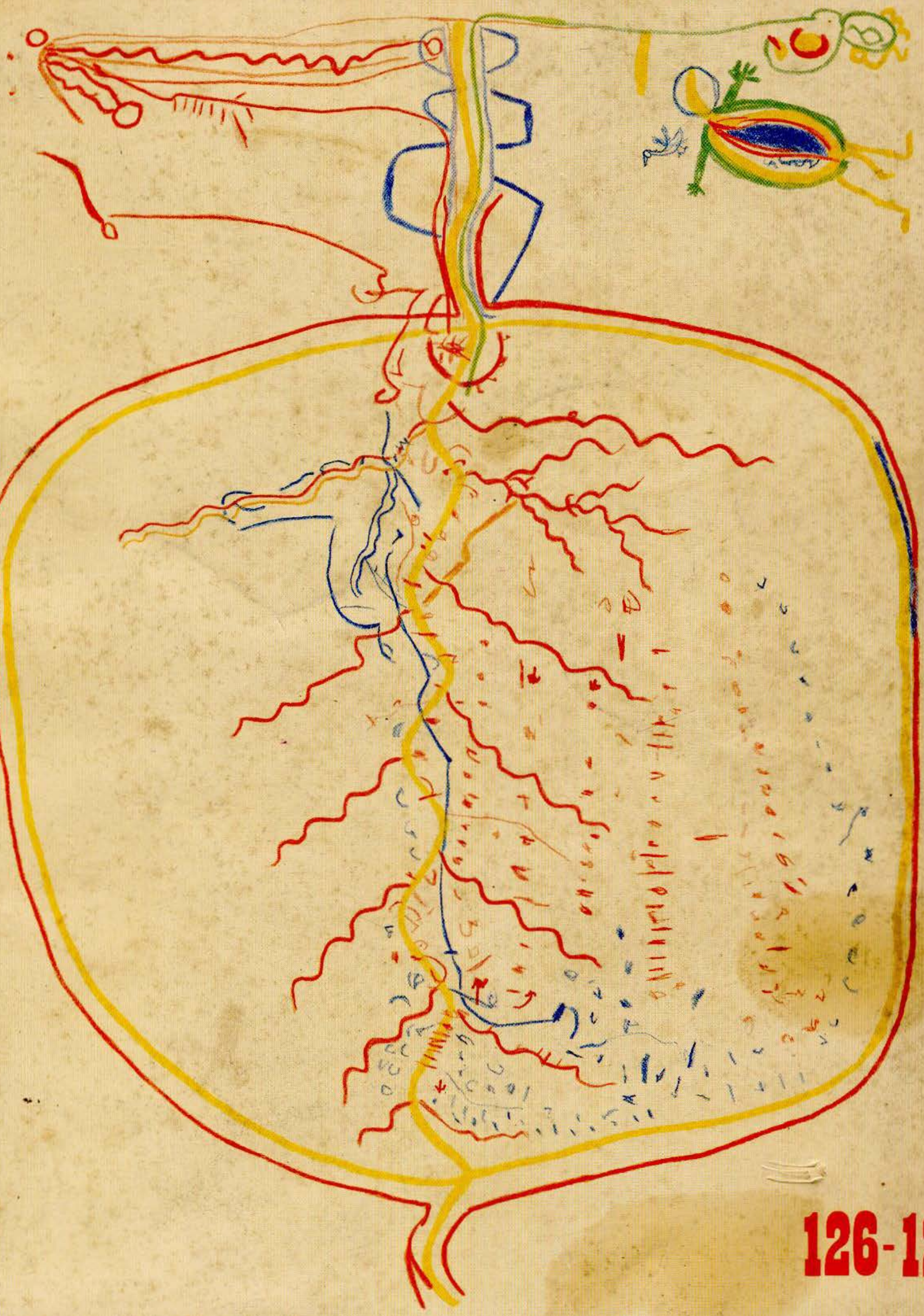
L'HOMME

La remontée de l'Amazone



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PETER GOW

Gringos and Wild Indians

Images of History in Western Amazonian Cultures

Peter Gow, *Gringos and Wild Indians. Images of History in Western Amazonian Cultures.*—In apparent contrast to the supposedly static and antihistoric culture of most Amazonian societies, the people of the lower Urubamba stress the transformational and transient nature of civilisation, a process poised between the asocial existence of "wild Indians" and the dehumanized life of urban Whites who live through machines. The author compares this social philosophy with that of other purportedly "acculturated" Indians of the Amazon, and shows how the distinctive culture of these groups develops themes common to "traditional" native groups, while reflecting the weight of history in Amazonia.

Until the last few decades, there was very little serious ethnographic writing on Western Amazonia, the eastern lowlands of Peru, Ecuador and southern Colombia[1]. But although the region was anthropologically *terra incognita*, it was extremely well described by other outsiders. On the one hand, there are the voluminous research of missionaries, which now constitute the major archive for historical researches. On the other hand, the region had been the subject of some of the most vivid and diverse travel writing of all of South America. There is Marcoy's urbane and witty account of his trip down the Urubamba, Ucayali and Amazon rivers in the middle of the last century (1867), a journey undertaken on the flimsy pretext that it was the shortest route back to Paris from Cuzco. At the opposite end of the spectrum there is Leonard Clarke's, *The Rivers Ran East* (1954), as racy in its prose as it is implausible in its contents, and who plunged into the region in the 1940's as if into the Freudian unconscious itself. At the heart of all this writting are the indigenous peoples of the region, all those head-shrinking Jívaros, witchridden Campas and cannibal Huitotos.

Taussig, in his wide-ranging study of *yagé* shamanism in the Andean colonization frontier of the Putumayo of southeastern Colombia (1987), has grasped the import of this literature on the region. He notes the convergence

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between the colonial fantasies of the literature of the "wild men of the hot lowlands", the *aucas*, and the colonial mode of production, which extracted such images from the region in the same way that it extracted rubber. He goes on to argue that such images are "left-handed gifts" from colonizer to colonized, for they provide the latter with a means to subject the determinism of power to active human agency in the process of *yagé* curing. In this sense, the literary representations of Western Amazonia, with the intense imagery they have generated, cannot simply be dismissed by anthropologists as false, but must be recognized as a central part of the colonial history of the area. To understand the history of Western Amazonia is to understand the documentary archive through which that history can come to be known. Since that archive was largely written by missionaries and travellers, a historiography of the region must address the complex imagery of wildness and savagery through which such writers described the region.

If the colonial history of Western Amazonia has been articulated by images of "wild Indians" and trackless forests, how is the product of that history lived as social reality by people in the region? Despite the massive growth in our knowledge of Western Amazonian cultures since the 1960's, we still know little about this problem. Ethnographers of the region have, perhaps naturally, been reluctant to represent the peoples they have studied as ciphers of the fantasies of others. Consider, for example, Weiss' painstaking debate with this literature in the footnotes to his study of the Campa (1975). After all, ethnographers' primary experience of fieldwork is of the people they lived with, not of how these people operate as metaphors for others. But, as ethnographic knowledge has grown, it is clear that certain Western Amazonian peoples make extensive use of images of others in ongoing social processes. It is these peoples, and the role of such images in their social lives, which forms the subject of this paper. Here I explore how images of wild Indians operate within certain Western Amazonian social worlds, rather than how they operate in the representation of those worlds elsewhere. Using specific examples, I show how images of wild Indians form part of a general vision of the formation of the local social world and its ongoing creation, and how they also relate to other images of distant others, especially that of the *gringo*.

My focus here is on a specific set of Western Amazonian peoples, the native people of the Bajo Urubamba, the Canelos Quichua, the Lamista Quechua and the Cocamilla, all of whom have been described in recent ethnographies. All four cases pose analysts with major problems with respect to history. All have been described as "acculturated" peoples, in the sense of having moved historically from a primordial cultural purity through contact with, and domination by, colonial economic and political control. The day-to-day practices of these peoples show unmistakable evidence of colonial cultural transformation: Christianity and the church is central to community life, or they speak Spanish as a main language of everyday interaction. All four peoples live in areas which have long been points of entry to and departure from Western Amazonia, such that the

documentary archive on these people stretches back to the very earliest period of Spanish colonial penetration of South America. Indeed, so great is the time-depth of archival materials on these peoples that the very notion of a "primordial cultural purity" is placed in doubt. As I have discussed for the Bajo Urubamba case (Gow 1991), it is almost impossible to know when, over the past four-and-a-half centuries, any particular cultural practice was adopted or under what conditions. By the same token, "acculturation" is simply a shorthand cover term for our ignorance of what was happening in Western Amazonia until professional ethnographic interest developed in the region in the last few decades.

My concern with these four cases in this paper is not properly historical, but rather ethnographic, and I focus on the descriptions by ethnographers of contemporary practices in the communities studied. My interest is in how, within such lived social worlds, images of wild Indians and *gringos* organize the interior of social life as an ongoing process. My argument is that for these Western Amazonian peoples, wild Indians and *gringos* form the twin poles of a continuum. The middle of that continuum is the social world of the Western Amazonian peoples themselves, a social world that is constituted as the historical product of intermarriage between different kinds of people in the past. As images of extreme otherness, wild Indians and *gringos* function to define the limits of the system, by opposing unassimilated difference to the assimilated differences which define life in the immediate social world. My main example is drawn from my own fieldwork on the Bajo Urubamba river in Peru, but I follow the logic of this particular social world out into other areas known through the writings of other ethnographers. In the conclusion to the paper, I discuss how the analysis presented here helps us to rethink Western Amazonian ethnography and history, by taking the social processes implicated in particular forms of imagery seriously.

Gringos and Wild Indians of the Bajo Urubamba

The native people of the Bajo Urubamba live in a series of communities ranging in population from less than 50 people to over a thousand in the mission town of Sepahua. Almost all these communities are focussed on a core of Piro people, but with a large number of kin, affines and others who are Campa, Machiguenga, *mestizo*, Cocama or of other ethnic origin. Ethnic groups are hard to pin down in the Bajo Urubamba area, since personal identities are predicated on the intermarriage of previous generations, in the idiom of "mixed blood". It is through this idiom, as I discuss further below, that kinship ties, which order the day-to-day relations within the community, are linked to the historical transformation of native people's lives (see Gow 1991 for a much more extended discussion of these themes).

During my research in the native communities of the Bajo Urubamba, I was often told stories about *indios bravos*, wild Indians, and especially about

the Yaminahua. Indeed, during the early months of the research, I learned more about what these people thought about the Yaminahua than I learned about the Piro and Campa I had come to study. Or so I thought at the time. Telling stories about the Yaminahua, I later discovered, was one of the means by which these native people told me about themselves and interrogated me about myself. The following is an example, related to me in 1980. The narrator had, as a youth, accompanied the Dominican missionary P. Alvarez on a journey to contact a Yaminahua group living on the Inuya, who subsequently moved to Sepahua.

> We arrived where the Yaminahua lived. They were huge people, not like us. We Piro are small and skinny, but those Yaminahua were big and strong, I was young then, and I was afraid of them. Their chief was very big, with big arms. They wore no clothes. When Padre Alvarez held a mass, they came naked, even to the mass! Alvarez didn't like that, so in the evening he gave all of them some clothing, and told them to put it on. But in the morning they had thrown all the clothing away, it was scattered everywhere, they just threw it away. Alvarez wanted to show these people civilization, so the chief ordered forty people to go with him. Padre Alvarez took them with us back to Sepahua. Four ran away, but 36 arrived in Sepahua. They had a fight there, so now some are in Sepahua and some are in San José[2]. The Yaminahua aren't so wild now, they used to kill the lumber workers for guns and bullets, for machetes and axes. These things they took, but they left salt and sugar and clothes. They didn't know what these were for, so they just left them strewn around. But now they have learned not to kill people, now the lumber workers have told them that they have only come to find wood[3].

Images of wild Indians have a much more general circulation than such events of personal experience narratives. The Yaminahua are invoked in the most diverse circumstances in native people's lives. A man will complain about his wife's cooking of meat, and ask, "Am I Yaminahua that you give me raw game to eat?" Caught by surprise as he bathes naked, an old man warns the newcomers to avert their eyes as he leaves the water, and comments, "I'm like a wild Indian now!" A young child's fearful reaction to a stranger provokes its mother to shout at it, "Yaminahua!", thus linking the child's fear to the isolation of the forestdwelling wild Indians. This imagery of the Yaminahua and other such peoples is constantly available to native people in order to define themselves as "civilized" *(civilizados)* and to morally evaluate each other's behaviour.

These images of the wild Indian, of the Yaminahua, are images of the Other, but not of particularly remote Others. While some of the people currently resident on the Bajo Urubamba, those who are recent immigrants from the Tambo, the lower Ucayali or further afield, will have had little or no contact with the Yaminahua themselves, most of the local people will have had such contacts. Those who have lived in Sepahua will have had daily dealings with the Yaminahua, which include friendships and ritual coparenthood *(compadrazgo)* ties. In no sense are these images of wild Indians abstract

projections onto an unknown other, but rather they draw much of their force from active contacts with the Yaminahua people. Indeed, the day-to-day use of such images often sparks off a longer narrative of personal experience which nests the present situation within a wider context of such contacts between different kinds of people.

While the ethnohistory of relations between the Piro and their Panoan neighbours largely remains to be written[4], there are some strong hints that these relations extend far into the past and have been intense. The Piro have long been the neighbours of, and interacted in various forms with, the Amahuaca, who function in local imagery as "tamed wild Indians", a weaker version of the Yaminahua. Contacts between the Bajo Urubamba Piro and the Yaminahua were probably less common, since the latter people seem to have originally lived much further to the north. But it is intriguing to note that, in the middle of the nineteenth century, Piro-speaking peoples lived downstream from all the major concentrations of Panoan peoples like the Yaminahua and Cashinahua. Thus Chandless (1866, 1869) reports meeting the Piro-speaking Kuniba on the Juruá river, and the Piro-speaking Manitineri on the Purús, and reports the Piro-speaking Kanamarim on the Curumahá (see also Rivet & Tastevin 1921)[5]. Along with the Urubamba Piro and those on the Manú river to the southeast, these Piro-speaking communities formed a network of trading links, which probably included the Panoan people too. The cultural evidence of these links is as sketchy as the historical data, but many Piro people have a deep knowledge of Amahuaca and Yaminahua culture. This is reflected in many of the accounts of my informants, which contained detailed and accurate descriptions of Panoan cultural practices as varied as hammock-making and funerary endocannibalism. There is even a genre of humorous Piro narratives, the tales of Shanirawa, which implicitly parodies Yaminahua culture and mythology[6]. It is likely that the Piro and Panoan peoples like the Amahuaca and Yaminahua have been interacting for a very long time, and simultaneously elaborating complex symbolic forms for this interaction. This is an area which deserves more detailed analysis than it has so far received in Panoan studies, which have largely ignored the extensive interactions between the Juruá-Purús Panoans and the Arawakan Piro.

But the stories and comments I heard about the Yaminahua in the early 1980's are amenable to a more restricted analysis. Certain themes recur so frequently in these accounts as to constitute a core image of the wild Indian, as currently instantiated by the Yaminahua. For the people who told me about the wild Indians, the Yaminahua formed an image of social closure of a particular sort and potency. Three points were constantly reiterated: the Yaminahua do not wear clothes, they do not eat salt, and they live off there in the forest. Their positive attribute flow from these negative ones. Central to the image of the wild Indians on the Bajo Urubamba is remoteness from major rivers, the arteries of the local economy. This remoteness is not interpreted as a mere spatial distance, but as something like a moral choice: wild

Indians live far off in the forest, at the headwaters of the eastern tributaries of the Urubamba river, to avoid contact with other people, and in particular to avoid exchange relations.

The absence of clothing and salt from the practices of wild Indians is evidence of this crucial point: they do not engage in commercial exchange. All native people on the Bajo Urubamba are engaged in *habilitación*, the system of boss/worker ties of debt which structures the local economy. Through their engagement in habilitación, native people transform their work on local resources such as tropical hardwoods into such imported manufactured goods as clothing and salt[7]. For native people, it is through the complex mechanics of habilitación, with its attendent hierarchy of bosses and workers, that the forest, as an object of work, is transformed into the *cosas finas*, the "fine things", the production of which engages modes of knowledge unvailable on the Bajo Urubamba. Such modes of knowledge are embodied in native people's image of *la fábrica* "the factory", a mysterious site of material transformation located in cities and *afuera* "outside" that is, outside of Amazonia. The tight weave and odd materials of factory-made cloth and the fine grains of table salt are evidence of processes of fabrication which are unknown on the Bajo Urubamba.

Native people experience habilitación as a system which extends outwards from them in two directions, and which operated through disparities in knowledge, and hence of power. Only *afuera*, outside, are there people who know how to transform raw forest materials into fine things. Therefore, native people must enter the forest, going towards its centre (*centro del monte* "remote primary forest"), to extract products like tropical hardwoods, to exchange with the outside in return for those fine things from the factories. But further, precisely because the fine things encode awe-inspiring forms of material transmutation, native people fear direct contacts with the outside, and rely on their *patrones*, the local white bosses, to mediate the processes through the complex debt-and-credit transactions of habilitación. Native people define themselves, in this context, as hardworking but ignorant, capable of the earlier labour-intensive phases of transformation but incapable of the later knowledge-intensives phases. It is the simultaneous physical power and lack of knowledge which lead native people to engage in the profoundly exploitative relations they have with their *patrones*. They say that their bosses cheat them continuously, but their bosses alone help them to work in habilitación.

The exchanges of habilitación are the source of more than fine things for native people, however. They are also the source of history. Because the ancient people were enslaved by the bosses in the times of rubber, they were brought into contact with other peoples, they intermarried and produced children. This was the beginning of kinship. Like the contemporary wild Indians the ancient people lived in forest, "fighting and hating each other", marrying only among themselves. Kinship, as the production of children through the intermarriage of men and women of different origins, began only

with the enslavement of the asocial ancient people. As I have argued at length elsewhere (Gow 1991), kinship and history are identified by native people.

Native people understand kinship to be the product of the ongoing transformational potential of *trabajo* "work". One form of work is that done in relations of habilitación, which generates the fine things. Another is the "work" of sexual relations, which generates babies. But the most important is the "work" of producing the vegetable staples of plantains and manioc, which in combination with game found in the river or forest, are fed to children to satisfy their hunger and generate their bodies and, most importantly, their memories. When a hungry child is fed plantains and game, "real food" *(comida legítima)* by adults, it responds to this evidence of caring with the use of kin terms. As it grows to adulthood, these kin terms and the memory of childhood care will be reciprocated by its adult generosity with food. A native community on the Bajo Urubamba is essentially a set of married couples linked together by such memories of childhood caring, and its central dynamic is the ceaseless flow of real food between coresidents. Coresidents either are kinspeople already, or will become kinspeople from the point-of-view of the children growing up in the village.

The identification of kinship and history has two interrelated aspects: the intermarriage of different kinds of people, and the process of "becoming civilized". The consumption of fine things such as clothing and salt (and much else besides) defines native people as *gente civilizada* "civilized people". This is in contrast to both contemporary wild Indians and the forest-dwelling ancestral peoples. But the level of consumption of fine things also encodes the transformation of the position of native people within habilitación. In contrast to the ancestral people, contemporary native people engage in habilitación for much higher returns. The ancestral people worked, as the slaves of the rubber bosses, for little or nothing: an axe or a pair trousers seemed to them a good reward for a year's work. Contemporary people do not allow themselves to be cheated so easily, for they now know what things are worth. This is because they are civilized people, who speak Spanish, can read and write, and know money and its value. They now have access to the basic knowledge of the bosses, even if they would still be afraid of entering a bank or trying to borrow large sums of money from a sawmill in Pucallpa. Being civilized means no longer having to live as slaves of the bosses, even if it does not liberate them from habilitación. Only the knowledge of the factory would do that, but then even the bosses on the Bajo Urubamba do not seem to possess *that* kind of knowledge.

Central to the definition of *gente civilizada*, "civilized people", is the contrast to *gente del monte*, "forest people". Those who allows themselves to be cheated too much or over-exploited in habilitación are by definition "forest people", those who *falta civilizarse*, "need to civilize themselves". For native people on the Bajo Urubamba, the ancestral people were such, as are the contemporary Campa of the Tambo river[8]. Such people not only allow themselves to be

exploited outrageously, but are also incapable of creating kinship. The most intensified image of the forest people is that of the wild Indian. Such people do not work in habilitación, and hence are not exploited, but they embody the lack of "civilization" as a total condition.

On the face of it, one might expect that the wild Indians would function as images of proud resistance to the exploitation and immiseration of native people's conditions in habilitación, but they do not. The reason is that just as habilitación is seen as exploitative, it is also seen as the origin of kinship. The Yaminahua, like other 'wild Indians, do not have kinship in the sense I outlined above. Like the forest-dwelling ancestors of contemporary native people, the wild Indians live in small isolated social groups, with a hypersociality within and warfare between them. Consistently, descriptions of the Yaminahua focussed on the fact that they all live together in "one big house", and that they are hostile and aggressive with outsiders. Despite their physical size and corporeal power, the Yaminahua do not work in habilitación. Their work is not channelled into exchange networks but rather held within the one big house. For native people, there is something vaguely incestuous about this way of life.

This image of the social closure of the wild Indians also resonates strongly against the other aspect of native people's identification of kinship and history: the mixing of blood in intermarriage between different kinds of people. Contemporary native people see themselves as the products of several generations of such intermarriages, and hence term themselves, "of mixed blood" *(de sangre mezclada)*. This mixing defines a set of intermarried kinds of people as "people like us", those who in everyday discourse are called *gente*, "person, people" [9]. This category includes Piro, Campa, mestizos, and other kinds of people presently living in the native communities of the Bajo Urubamba, and occuring in past generations. The local whites, the class of bosses, are occasionally excluded from the category *gente*, as are the Amahuaca. But in both cases, they are often also included. Native people point out that the local whites all have native ancestry, while the Amahuaca have intermarried with Piro, Campa and mestizos (although none of my informants admitted to close kin or affinal ties to Amahuaca).

The Yaminahua are not *gente*, they are *indios bravos*, wild Indians. This is the primary force of the social closure that characterizes the image of the wild Indians. They are not "people" because they do not engage in any peaceful contacts with native people. They do not and have never intermarried with native people, so they are not kin, and hence not people. Indeed, they cannot intermarry with native people, for they are not fit marriage partners: the men do not work in habilitación and the women cannot cook edible food. For all the erotic appeal of Yaminahua women for native men, no sexual contacts could go further and be transformed into marriages which produce children. For native women, Yaminahua men might be attractive as hunters, but their inability to obtain fine things make them unacceptable husbands.

In this sense, the imagery of the wild Indians is remarkably similar to that of *gringos*, those awesome outsiders who possess the knowledge of "the factory". In native people's experience, gringos seldom have children, and often are unmarried. Frequently, they are alone. Like the Yaminahua, they are tall and light-skinned, for like wild Indians, they do not seem to do any work. They also refuse intermarriage with local people. Neither wild Indians or gringos are people in this sense, for they have no place within kinship as the history of intermarriage between kinds of people.

I suspect that stories about gringos are no less common in native people's social processes than stories about the Yaminahua. They appear much less in my data, for the obvious reason that I am a gringo, and native people are extremely polite. To some extent, I *was* the data, for native people frequently asked me for details of life in my country, how things were made in factories, if gringos had really been to the moon, and so on. To my face, native people often told me that they liked me because I could tell them about life in my distant homeland. Behind my back, many circulated rumours that I was a *sacacara* "face taker" who had come to kill them for their facial skin: such skin is used by gringos for plastic surgery, to restore lost youth and to gain eternity[10]. While I could not prove this, I suspect that gringo stories play as important a role in the relations between native people and the Yaminahua as wild Indian stories played in my own relations with native people.

The images of the gringo and the wild Indian have much in common, but they differ in one crucial aspect which heightens their power in native people's social life. Gringos are never imagined to be physically strong, and wild Indians are never imagined to be knowledgeable[11]. Gringos have great knowledge but are physically weak, while wild Indians are physically strong but ignorant. This difference between the two images of the Others as modes of social closure provides the space of social openness. This is kinship, where a certain amount of knowledge, "being civilized", is conjoined to a certain amount of corporeal vitality, "work", in order to generate the ramifying network of native people's social relations. The conjunction of knowledge and work both creates *gente*, in its local sense, and defines the correct modes of agency of *gente*. Gringos and wild Indians do not create *gente*, and hence are not *gente*. They are images of otherness in the full sense: they are what native people are not.

But, importantly, kinship has a temporal dimension, and its temporal dimension is history. Kinship is predicated on marriage, and the mixed blood condition of native people is predicated on the prior intermarriages of different kinds of people. Through intermarriages between kinds of people, the new generations become linked together as kinspeople, a linkage marked by their mixed blood. Their shared condition of heterogeneity renders them a homogenous category in opposition to the homogenous "purity" of those kinds of people who have not intermarried with past generations of the Bajo Urubamba. The homogenous purity of others like gringos and wild Indians

is located in the spatially distantiated, but also in the temporally distantiated. The ancestral kinds of people of contemporary native people were as asocial and as different as these contemporary others. Native people's own narrations of the past specify the temporal ordering of this transformation. Native people's narratives of the past are the history of "becoming civilized" through generational transformation, whereby the "work" of one generation created a new generation of children who were able to escape the domination and bondage of their parents. For native people, kinship is the result of a careful combination of corporeal work and knowledge. This is a thematic variation on the safe mixing of sameness and difference which Overing Kaplan (1981) has identified as a central feature of much of indigenous Amazonian social philosophy. The fact that the narratives of the native people of the Bajo Urubamba deal with the "times of rubber" or "the coming of the Summer Institute of Linguistics" should not deflect us from recognizing the essential homology between these narratives and those discussed by Overing for the Gê-Bororo, Northwest Amazon or the Guianas, as I have discussed in depth elsewhere (Gow 1991).

I started this paper with the imagery of Western Amazonia in the writings of travellers and, following Taussig, in the curing sessions of shamans along the colonization frontier of southeastern Colombia. My ethnography of a small group of communities within Western Amazonia suggests both that strongly articulated imagery of otherness is as much used by the indigenous people of the region as it is used of them. But my account here has shown that such imagery is not restricted by Western Amazonian peoples to such domains of otherness as travel or the shamanic curing session, but fully integrated into daily life. The wild Indians and the gringos, both as images and as people, are inserted into everyday social processes on the Bajo Urubamba in order to render such processes significant within the wider frame of history as the ongoing transformation of kinds of people. These images give daily life what Munn (1973) has termed, in a rather different context, its "quintessential meaningfulness". Through the constant engagement of images of difference in daily life, kinship is rendered as history.

My analysis of the situation on the Bajo Urubamba could perhaps be dismissed as a special case, and not generally applicable to Western Amazonia. Perhaps my data can better be explained by the historical role of the Piro in regional trade systems, by their ancient contacts with the Inca state upstream, or even by the influence of the Dominican missionaries of Sepahua, whose special brand of liberation theology has given a unique cast to life on the Bajo Urubamba. The Bajo Urubamba may well be a special case, but a very similar logic of social life and imagery of difference operates elsewhere in the region. I now turn to three other Western Amazonian social systems, the Canelos Quichua, the Lamista Quechua and the Cocamilla, and look at them from the point-of-view of the Bajo Urubamba. Careful attention to the actual use of imagery of wild Indians and gringos in these cases will reveal a fundamental similarity to the Bajo Urubamba.

The Canelos Quicha, the Lamista Quechua and the Cocamilla

Within Western Amazonia, the native people of the Bajo Urubamba bear the most obvious similarity to the Canelos Quichua of Ecuador, who are well-known through Whitten's two major monographs (1976, 1985). In particular, Whitten's account of what he terms "generational mobility and ethnic structure" (1985: 78-81) closely resembles the role of intermarriage in the genesis of kinship on the Bajo Urubamba. In both cases, local communities are unthinkable except in the way in which they are embedded in wider regional systems, and similarly both peoples are characterized by the multiplicity of personal identities. For the Canelos, this multiplicity is organized through the core opposition between the *alli runa*, "good Christian person" and *sacha runa*, "forest person" modes of personal identity. This closely resembles the idiom of mixed blood on the Bajo Urubamba, where personal identity is founded on the unification of opposed group identities[12].

Reeve, in her discussion of Curaray Runa (a Canelos subgroup) narratives of rubber times (1988), presents a very similar account of the use of images of otherness in social processes to the one presented above for the Bajo Urubamba. The images of the other are used to build up the central idiom of *runapura*, "people among themselves", in opposition to the *huiragucha/ ahuallacta*, "foreigners", on the one hand, and *auca*, "fierce indigenous enemies", on the other. Both articulate images of otherness in opposition to a central term which is defined in terms of its interior differences. Within the category *runa*, "people", difference has been overcome through prior intermarriages, while the differences starkly remain with the Others. Reeve particularly discusses the position of those *runa* who are descendants of *huiragucha* rubber bosses, who are simultaneously "now Runa" and non-Runa.

If the imagery of the *huiragucha* as "ignorant wealthy foreigners" has been well described for the Canelos, the ethnographers provide little informations on the content of the images of the *auca*. Perhaps this reticence comes from an understandable unwillingness to add to the voluminous literature of racist fantasies about the best-known Auca, the Waorani people. But Reeve provides some sense of the issue when she writes that the concept of *runapura*, "Quichua speakers among ourselves" is strongly contrasted with "those animal-like tropical forest peoples who have killed or captured our relatives", the *auca*. While the ethnography is not clear on this point, it seems that the process of "generational mobility and ethnic structure", the Canelos model of intermarriage between peoples, excludes the *auca*. Such exclusion, following Reeve, is basically the meaning of the term. But I suspect that in the Canelos case, as on the Bajo Urubamba, the *auca* function as a source of the ongoing productivity of the system, as unintegrated others. This theme is not uncommon in Amazonia, where the underlying structural similarity of warfare, trade and intermarriage was pointed out by Lévi-Strauss (1943)[13]. The recent history of relations between the Waorani and Canelos would seem to bear this out,

as warfare has transformed into ritual coparenthood and marital relations (Yost 1981; L. Rival, personal communication).

Both the Canelos Quichua and the native people of the Bajo Urubamba are social systems predicated on intermarriages between different kinds of people both as an organizing idiom of historical processes and as a guiding idiom of actual marriages. But the region also contains social systems in which such intermarriage is unusual, or indeed frowned upon. Examples would be the Lamista Quechua and the Cocamilla. Does imagery of otherness play a similar constitutive role in these latter cases, or is it a feature only of those systems predicated on expanding marital alliance? My argument here will be that these systems, despite their apparent closure, do operate through such imagery, but in a slightly different form.

Scazzocchio's ethnography (1978, 1979) of the Lamista Quechua of the Huallaga river in Peru shows how the *awka* are linked both to trade and to the *sacha runa* identity. The "forest person" aspect of Lamista Quechua people is connected to the invisible or muted networks of trade relations and other contacts with wild Indian peoples, remote from the town of Lamas, which is the locus of the visible exchanges between Lamista and mestizos. Scazzocchio (1979) presents the Lamista Quechua as a largely endogamous unit, and indeed two largely endogamous units, which are moieties further divided into named districts *(barrios)*, so that contacts with these other peoples exclude intermarriage[14]. In this sense the Lamista would seem to be very differently organized to the Canelos or the native people on the Bajo Urubamba, and their images of the other are not socially engaged with processes of the historical construction of the immediate social world.

But the Lamista case is far from unambiguous, for Lamista men are often evoked as ancestors on the Bajo Urubamba, and living Lamista men are found in the native communities of that river. This is also noted by Stocks among the Cocamilla (1981: 141). Those Lamista men I talked to on the Bajo Urubamba made much of their Lamista identity, and often talked of returning home, but also talked of their marriages to local women as a productive act of mixing blood with what they frequently call *indios*, "Indians". One Piro man commented on his Lamista father-in-law,

> The old man is Lamista, from San Martín. He came here and sowed his seed here. He let his roots grow here, he has many children and grandchildren[15].

It seems likely that the Lamista Quechua are endogamous *from the point-of-view* of Lamas and other Huallaga communities, and from that same point-of-view other indigenous peoples are seen as *awka*. But, viewed from a community seen as *awka* in Lamas (such as a Piro village), the Lamista people are exogamous, and intermarriage is interpreted as an intensification of the *sacha runa* identity. Marriage is thus a possibility implicit in the trading network centering on the Lamista core area, an outward movement which results in

the creation of new kin ties within the *awka* area. Indeed, on the Bajo Urubamba, the Lamista are classified as *moza gente*, a term best interpreted as "indigenous northern Amazonian people of mixed blood", however, contradictory that formulation may seem (see Gow 1991: 86-87).

Like Scazzocchio on the Lamista Quechua, Stock's ethnography of the Cocamilla (1981) is framed by the issue of preserving ethnic identity through historical change. His study revolves around what he takes to be a central paradox: while the Cocamilla have managed to maintain a separate identity throughout their long and complex history of relations with white people, they also refused to take advantage of the *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas* (Law of Native Communities, promulgated in 1974) which would have provided them with a framework to gain legal control over their land. On the face of it, the Cocamilla's refusal to use this law is surprising, especially in light of the exploitation they have suffered in the past, and it prompts Stocks to characterize the Cocamilla as "invisible native people". However, careful reading of Stocks' ethnography reveals a little of the complexity of Cocamilla notions of identity as a historical process, and also reveals that the Cocamilla could only become "native people" if the meaning that term had for them were to be transformed.

Like the Lamista, the Cocamilla are also largely endogamous, but they are divided into a series of exogamous patrilineal groups called *sangres*, "bloods". These *sangres* are associated with surnames, which are identified by the Cocamilla as *apellidos humildes*, "humble surnames", in contrast to the "high surnames" of whites. Most of the surnames are described as *tribu*, a term which seems to mean something like distant or wild Indian in local discourse. But the Cocamilla most certainly do not identify themselves as *tribu*, and Stocks gives an example of the active response of the people of Achual Tipishca to the rumour that one of the local school teachers had suggested that they were *tribus*. This suggests that, for the Cocamilla, the historical process of forming contemporary Cocamilla, as a people, is the set of intermarriages of *tribus* and others (Stocks mentions Brazilians, Lamista and mestizos), which left the surnames as traces of that historical process. Both as forms of personal identity and as images of linkage between generations, the surnames encode the process of historical transformation and creation of the contemporary Cocamilla.

I suspect that it is Stock's failure to recognize this problem that leads to his assumption of contradiction in the following two statements from the same Cocamilla man. Commenting on the Cocamilla and the Law of Native Communities, this man said,

> They are not *nativos*. They are citizens. The majority have their documents and the laws consider them the same as anyone else. A *nativo* is one who knows nothing, one who needs a boss. We see them everyday in the SINAMOS office, where they go to ask for help.

On another occasion, the man complained that he had been forced out of a government education job because,

> I was a *cholo* and the other teachers were mestizos, they didn't want to take orders from a *cholo*. So they conspired against me.

But perhaps it is only Stocks who sees an underlying identity between what those teachers called a *cholo* and what the Cocamilla man called *nativos*. This man quite clearly articulates the difference between a kind of person who is independent of bosses, and who does not need help, and a kind of person who is ignorant, and who needs a boss to defend him. To use a Bajo Urubamba idiom, Stocks' informant is one who "can defend himself", even if he cannot become other people's boss.

The point is important, because Stocks effectively erases from his account of the Cocamilla an important "ethnic" identity, that of the functionaries of the Law of Native Communities. The law, and its implementation, by the state organ SINAMOS, was overtly a revolutionary act, which was intended to render visible the traditional rights of tribal peoples. It rendered such rights visible, but only as an act of recognition by the state: there was no hint in this process that indigenous Amazonian people might already have been engaged in responses to their conditions of exploitation. It is clear from Stocks' account that the Cocamilla saw themselves as having thrown off the oppression of their bosses through their own efforts. It is hardly surprising that they resented attempts by SINAMOS to "help" them to acquire rights they had already achieved by their own agency. As the Cocamilla man pointed out, the very language of SINAMOS reproduced that of the boss who helps the poor *tribu*. To become native people, the Cocamilla would have to become *tribu*, which would negate both the history of their own struggles and the basis of their own identities as Cocamilla.

But in his very attempts to re-write the Cocamilla as native people, Stocks himself becomes implicated in the very sorts of processes the Cocamilla are struggling against. However laudable it is from an ethnographic perspective to see the Cocamilla as native people in the sense of an authentic indigenous Amazonian people who maintain a separate identity from others, it is absurd for an ethnographer to fail to distinguish between his own images and their meanings and those of the people he is studying. If as I have suggested here the Cocamilla are operating with two distinct images of indigenous identities, themselves versus the *tribus/nativos*, it is not surprising that they should reject any suggestion that they are the latter. Stocks confuses the imagery and social discourses of anthropological enquiry with those of lived social processes on the Bajo Huallaga. Such confusion is of course facilitated by the agency of the Law of Native Communities, which sought to unite anthropological categories, legal definitions and local discourses in one, at the expense of the last. If the Cocamilla refuse to be *nativos*, the problem lies with the law and

the discourses of anthropology, not with the Cocamilla who are living out the categories of a Western Amazonian social discourse. Stocks, who is a good ethnographer, reveals some of the social tensions of the situation of his own fieldwork when he records the rumour that caused so much trouble in Achual Tipishca: the teacher was said to have claimed that a gringo had "conquered" the *tribus* of the community. Presumably the gringo in question was Stocks himself. As Taussig (1987: 393) has pointed out, such rumours and accusations are a form of implicit social knowedlege which slips "in an out of consciousness as a constantly charged scanner of the obtuse as well as the obvious features of social relatedness".

My comments here are not intended to imply any disrespect for Stocks as an ethnographer or for SINAMOS as an organization. Rather, I write from my own quite different experience on the Bajo Urubamba, where I was always bemused by local people's enthusiasm for the term native people and for the *Ley de las Comunidades Nativas*, to the virtual exclusion of alternative discourses of identity or community. If our project is to know the cultures of indigenous Western Amazonian peoples, then the hostility of the Cocamilla to the term native people, and the enthusiasm of those on the Bajo Urubamba, are both data that provide us with important directions for research. The last thing we should do is to decide in advance what such people are, and then interrogate them for their failure to live up to our own images of them. At least the formulators and implementors of the Law of Native Communities could plead the novelty, magnitude and urgency of their task as a reason for their failure to address the precise nuances of local situations, which ethnographers could not[16].

Just as the specificities of the Bajo Urubamba case might be related exclusively to the specificities of the history of the Bajo Urubamba, perhaps the general patterns I have discerned in the cases discussed here can be referred to the generalities of Western Amazonian history. Each of the cases discussed here has been, at one or other time, defined as an "acculturated people" which cannot provide us with genuine knowledge of Western Amazonian indigenous cultures. But this image of acculturated peoples belongs to a theoretical frame in which peoples have more or less history, too much or too little. We have now abandoned this conceit, and accept that all Amazonian peoples have histories. Attention has shifted away from the presence or absence of history to a concern for the precise relationship between indigenous cultures as known ethnographically and historically.

The sorts of images of difference and the processes of overcoming or maintaining social differentiation I have discussed for four Western Amazonian cases are homologous to those described for other indigenous cultures of the region. This has been noted by Whitten (1976, 1985) and Taylor (1981) for the relations between the Canelos and Achuar, while the Bajo Urubamba case bears marked formal similarities to social discourses of otherness and sameness in Amuesha

social thought (Santos 1991), and in Panoan societies such as the Cashinahua as described by McCallum (1989), the Yaminahua and Sharanahua as described by Townsley (1989) and Siskind (1973), and Keiffenheim (1990) and Roe (1988) on the Shipibo and Conibo, and the comparative discussion in Erikson (1986). It is these structural homologies which are the most profound argument against treating such diverse cases as subject to distinct modes of analysis. The acculturated peoples differ from the traditional peoples not so much because they have a history which the latter do not, but in the content of the images of difference they use to define and generate social relations.

The use of images of otherness is not the problem here. The problem is the specific others from which the peoples I have discussed above build their imagery. There is an important difference between the images of the wild Indian and the gringo as deployed on the Bajo Urubamba and the images of *nawa*, "enemies", and *yura futsa*, "other people", as deployed by the Sharanahua (Siskind 1973: 49-52). The latter images of difference seem to lie authentically within an indigenous Amazonian social discourse. The former intersect, to a rather disturbing degree, with the colonial imagery of domination and wildness through which outsiders have always viewed the region. Ethnographers, committed to producing genuine knowledge of Western Amazonian cultures to place against that colonial historical discourse, are disturbed to find the indigenous peoples themselves using such terms, and apparently simply repeating the form of colonial discourse[17]. But, as Taussig points out, the colonial discourses are themselves a "left-handed gift" to the colonized, to be reworded and refashioned to set up a complex and ambiguous series of discourses about local identities. Thus the *alli runa*, "good Christian person", among the Canelos is given a very different meaning to its colonial one when viewed from the perspective of the *sacha runa*, "forest person", identity, with which it is inextricably bound. Similarly, the identity of *gente civilizada*, "civilized people" ceases to be an image of defeat when viewed from the perspective of the imagery of the gringo as one who is too "civilized" to even reproduce.

My analysis here has concentrated on recent ethnographies of Western Amazonian peoples, and discussed history primarily as an ethnographic problem, the issue of how particular Amazonian people's view the origins of their lived worlds. At most, such an analysis can only challenge or subvert unreflective images of Western Amazonian history or raise problems for historical analysis. It cannot substitute for such history. But the issue of Western Amazonian history raises an interesting problem. As I noted in the introduction to this paper, the documentary archive from which such a history can be contructed is mainly composed of the writings of missionaries and travellers, and as Santos (1988), has noted for the Peruvian case at least, the history of Western Amazonian has virtually exclusively been written by missionaries and anthropologists. Very few professional historians have ever addressed the region's past, which is in marked contrast to the situation in the Andes, where ethnographic

writing has long been subordinated and supplementary to the work of professional historiography[18]. In this we see another aspect of Western Amazonia as a fertile field of imagery. Because it remained unconquered, the region was never engaged in the sorts of social relations which generate the mass of documentary evidence on which historical research depends, and hence it has never attracted the interest of professional historians. It was primarily described by missionaries and travellers, and the archive formed by those descriptions has primarily been analysed by missionaries and anthropologists.

Missionaries, travellers and anthropologists are all, in their various ways, specialists in knowledge of the Others. Unlike travellers, missionaries and anthropologists are both, again in their various ways, committed to converting the Others from their Otherness. Since the 1960's, the ethnographers of Western Amazonia have been reducing the extremes of the exotic Other to the everyday commonsense of specific lived worlds. But as our knowledge of this commonsense everydayness of Western Amazonian cultures grows, we have gained the strategic position from which we can slowly begin to address the specific genius of those peoples of the region who have responded to their historical conditions with an audacious *bricolage*, which uses colonial history as an image from which to fashion themselves as the agents of their own creation. Starting from the autochthonous discourses of difference at their disposal, such peoples used all their contacts with missionaries, travellers and even anthropologists to fashion an image of colonial history as an aspect of their autopoesis.

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NOTES

1. The special circumstances of Western Amazonia are reflected in the *Handbook of South American Indians* (Steward 1946-1959), which was the major attempt to professionalize knowledge of indigenous South American cultures as part of ethnography. In most cases, the entries in the *Handbook* set the agenda for the subsequent research. By contrast, the entries on Western Amazonia, such as that by Métraux on the *Montaña*, were written on the basis of very inadequate information: essentially, Métraux used the missionary and travel writing on the region as a substitute for professional ethnography. For most of Western Amazonia, the *Handbook* now functions solely as a source bibliography for historical research.

2. This fight was between these Yaminahua and the local Amahuaca, who killed most of them. In the early 1980's, most of the Sepahua Yaminahua were a separate group from the Purús river.
3. This reference is presumably to the "Yaibashta" people of the Mishagua river, many of whom also subsequently moved to Sepahua.
4. See ZARZAR 1983 and ALVAREZ 1984.
5. It is likely that the Cashinahua and Yaminahua moved out of the headwaters areas as the destruction of the Piro-speaking populations left the main rivers vacant. The only surviving community of Piro-speakers in Brazil, the Manitineri of the Yaco river, live in very close contact with the Yaminahua, and indeed shared a village until very recently. I am grateful to Sabá, Toya and Zé Correa for this information.
6. In one of these stories, Shanirawa's mistakes tapir shit for fish poison, and his own kin for miraculous aquatic beings, the "Shamanic Fish People": the story thus inverts and mocks Yaminahua mythology, both "The Origin of Fish Poison" and "The Origin of *Ayahuasca*" (SISKIND 1973). The connection between the Piro tale and the Yaminahua myths is established by the term *pukma*, "*huaca* fish poison", which is identical to the Yaminahua form. Cecilia McCallum has suggested to me that the Piro name Shanirawa is a version of the Panoan "Chaninawa" "Lying Enemy/Lying Person".
7. It must be stressed that I discuss what native people told me, and how they interpret *habilitación*. The fact that *habilitación* evolved out of older trades ties (in which salt and clothing were important items) is no more relevant here than the actual details of Yaminahua ethnography are to the image of the wild Indians. It would be as pointless to say that native people mis-represent *habilitación* as it is to say they mis-represent the wild Indians.
8. See BROWN & FERNANDEZ (1991) for an account of conditions on the Tambo.
9. This everyday usage contrasts to shamanic discourses, where the term *gente* is applied to non-human powerful beings in order to create relations with them (see GOW 1989).
10. Such rumours are related to the *pishtaco* image (see SISKIND 1973; STOCKS 1981; TAUSSIG 1987). I am currently working on a book which deals with the role of such imagery in my own field experiences in the wider context of Piro people's interactions with foreigners and their insertion into a capitalist world system.
11. In marked contrast to the imagery of wild Indians on the colonization frontier discussed by Taussig, or in Amazonian cities (CHEVALIER 1982; CHAUMEIL 1988), native people never attribute potent shamanic knowledge to the Yaminahua or other wild Indians. I was once told that José Chorro, the famous leader and shaman of the Sepahua Yaminahua (see TOWNSLEY 1989), was a murderer who had killed many people, and I naïvely asked if he did this through sorcery. My informant looked incredulous, and said, "Of course not! What does he know? He kills people with his club!" On the Bajo Urubamba, it is Lamista, Napo Quechua, Cocama and mestizos who are feared for their shamanic knowledge (see GOW 1993).
12. See GOW (1991) for further comparison of Canelos and the native people of the Bajo Urubamba.
13. *Cf.* VIVEIROS DE CASTRO (1986) on the Other as Enemy, and as the source of social productivity.
14. It is not clear from Scazzocchio's ethnography how the Lamista themselves think of the *barrios* and their names. Scazzocchio suggests that these groups may have their origins in separate ethnic groups and in the workers of *encomenderos*, but she presents no account of Lamista conceptions of historical processes.
15. This image, a common one on the Bajo Urubamba, recalls that reported by STOCKS (1981: 141) for the Cocamilla. In the Bajo Urubamba case, the imagery refers to the manioc stick , which is taken from a harvested plant, moved to a new garden, planted and there sends out its roots into the soil.
16. See BARCLAY and SANTOS (1985) for a cultural critique of this law, and also GOW (1991) for further discussion.
17. See VIVEIROS DE CASTRO (1986) and GOW (1991) for a discussion of this problem of authenticity and indigenous sociologics in the ethnographies of "acculturated" Amazonian peoples.
18. I am grateful to Penelope Harvey for this observation, drawn from her own unpublished work on writing about the Andes.

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RÉSUMÉ

Peter GOW, *Les Gringos et les Sauvages. Images de l'histoire dans les cultures de l'Amazonie occidentale.* — En opposition aux cultures prétendument statiques et anti-historiques de la plupart des sociétés amazoniennes, les gens du bas Urubamba insistent sur la nature passagère et transformationnelle de la civilisation, conçue comme un processus à mi-chemin de l'existence asociale des « sauvages » et de la vie déshumanisée des Blancs urbanisés qui dépendent entièrement des machines. L'auteur compare cette philosophie sociale à celle d'autres groupes considérés comme très « acculturés », et montre comment la culture originale de ces sociétés développe des thèmes communs à celle des Indiens « traditionnels » tout en reflétant le poids de l'histoire en Amazonie.

RESUMEN

Peter GOW, *Los Gringos y los Salvajes. Imágenes de la historia en las culturas de la Amazonia occidental.* — En oposición a las culturas pretendidamente estatales y anti-históricas de la mayoria de las sociedades amazónicas, las gentes del bajo Urubamba insisten sobre la naturaleza pasajera y transformacional de la civilización, concevida como un proceso entre la existencia asocial de los « salvajes » y la vida deshumanizada de los Blancos urbanizados, quienes dependen por entero de las máquinas. El autor compara esta filosofía social a aquellas de los otros grupos considerados como muy « aculturizados », y muestra cómo la cultura original de estas sociedades desarrolla temas comunes a la de los Indígenas « tradicionales » al mismo tiempo que refleja el peso de la historia en Amazonia.

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